

INTRODUCTION

Examinations of the status and quality of education in the United States are often based on comparisons among states. Comparisons of this type are most useful, valid, and constructive when states are examined alongside other states with similar characteristics. It is also helpful to have a variety of factors that are important to public education conveniently arrayed for individual states. *State Profiles of Public Elementary and Secondary Education, 1996-97* is the third in a series of publications reporting summary data on the general characteristics, fiscal revenues and expenditures, educational agency and school numbers and sizes, and students and staff for each state, the District of Columbia, Department of Defense Dependents Schools, and the five outlying areas—American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

The factors for which these data are reported are those most commonly used to present a thumbnail sketch of the resources, needs, organization, and special characteristics of education within a state. When available, equivalent data for the 1987/88 school year are presented side-by-side to help in the assessment of changes over a ten-year period. This information is displayed in numeric and graphic form to make it useful for a wide range of audiences and purposes.

This report is divided into three major sections:

- **U.S. Profile**, summarizing the statistics across the 50 states and the District of Columbia on all variables;
- **Rankings of the States**, consisting of a collection of tables depicting the relative position of the various states and the District of Columbia on selected variables; and
- **Profiles of the States and Outlying Areas**, providing numeric and graphic information, listed alphabetically with Department of Defense dependents schools and the outlying areas appearing after the states.

Each profile presents five categories of relevant information:

- **General characteristics:** demographic and fiscal characteristics of the state, as well as number of students, teachers and public schools.
- **Agency/school information:** membership characteristics and sizes of schools and education agencies, grade levels in schools, and proportion of students and schools in different locales.
- **Student information:** the numbers and ethnic backgrounds of students, the numbers of high school completers and dropouts, and achievement levels for students in selected grades.
- **Staff information:** the numbers and proportions of instructional, support services, and administrative staff, average students to teacher ratios, salary information, and teacher characteristics.
- **Fiscal information:** revenues and expenditures data for elementary and secondary education, as well as federal aid to education under selected programs.

Data items that were not reported by the state or otherwise not available are indicated by the special character —. Since the U.S. Profile displays aggregate information for the 50 states plus the District of Columbia, some of the data items include estimates for the non responding state(s). Where it was not advisable or feasible to estimate, the character — is used. For percentages, details may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.